

THE STUDENTS' LETTER.

DEAR EDITOR,—

There is such an accumulation of news that it is difficult to know where to begin, but I will plunge at once into the most exciting item. On Sunday, October 28th, Miss Mason told us that we might expect Mr. Rooper the following Friday to hear the Criticism Lessons and inspect generally. Imagine our consternation, for we had a fixed idea that the time of Mr. Rooper's visit, like the law of the Medes and Persians, altered not. However, the thing must be borne philosophically. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday saw the Seniors, calm and collected, but with terrible determination writ large on every face, note-books in hand, and weighty volumes all round, assembled in the dining-room preparing sketches. After the rough notes had been made, should a luckless Junior present herself in class-room, hall, or passage, she was instantly seized upon, decoyed into a corner, "far from the madding crowd," and put through the special kind of "teaching" you know so well. Of course, you will believe and sympathise with the Seniors, who were heard to remark they had enjoyed those four days of preparation immensely? We hope the Juniors were as happy! Friday brought Mr. Rooper. Lessons began at 10-15 in the Class-room as usual. You know the mode of procedure on such occasions. Lessons were over soon after one o'clock. In the afternoon we exhibited our handicrafts. Two students were pounced upon to give a music-lesson and a child-pianist lesson, and then Misses Sumner, Firth, Stirling, Mademoiselle, and the Sergeant, by turn, arranged themselves in order for the fray. The Seniors read *Faust* with Fräulein, also—an innovation this year—Silvio Pellico's *Le Mie Prigioni*. Among the subjects on the list of Criticism Lessons were a Tonic Sol-fa, about which Mr. Rooper made very complimentary remarks; a lesson on the Physiography of the Lake District; one on

the Topography and Literary Associations of the District, and a Picture-Talk with Class IV. on *The Coronation of the Virgin*, by Fra Filippo Lippi, illustrated with Browning's poem. In the evening the Juniors gave a very delightful entertainment, which was much appreciated by Mr. Rooper, if one may judge by the frequent smiles that wreathed his face; and that it was enjoyed by the House goes without saying, in fact a P.N.E.U. (interpreted as Perfectly Natural Educational Union) mother visiting the cottage of her un-P.N.E.U. neighbour almost brought it down. These obliging Juniors also sang and acted a French song. The evening was concluded by Mr. Rooper asking for a whole holiday on Saturday; the vigorous clapping with which this statement was received must have convinced him of every one's appreciation; and the noise was great! Early Saturday morning Mr. Rooper left us.

The following Monday being half-term, twenty students set out for Keswick by coach. Of course it rained, but we spent a very enjoyable time nevertheless, scrambling by the sides of the Falls of Lodore, which had evidently surpassed itself for the occasion; going over the pencil works and visiting Crosthwaite Church, which is interesting from its associations with Southey. The drive home over the Dunmail Raise was very exciting, at least we called it exciting after we had reached Scale How in safety. It was late when we started and getting dark, and on the top of the Raise we entered cloudland and could see nothing but mist and fog all round. The horses walked slowly and picked their way carefully, and nothing was heard but the rolling of the wheels and the tramping of the horses, and the occasional feeble chirp of a courageous student enquiring of the world in general if it wasn't "awfully enjoyable"? However we emerged at last and assured one another with quite undue force we had enjoyed the novel experience. In the evening we had a Fancy Dress Ball, which has been rather a feature of the amusements this year. Several nations were represented, including Turkey, Japan, Sweden, Italy, and the Caucasus.

The Juniors have risen nobly to the occasion, or rather occasions, in the matter of entertainments. They have given us some most enjoyable evenings, in fact we yield them the palm without question.

We have had some good games of hockey this term, and hope to have reduced ourselves to the correct and scientific method of playing before the end of the year, though it is hard to "keep sides" when there is a chance of a fight.

The T.B. room no longer contains "teachers" hard at work and an occasional unlucky student who happens to come in at the wrong moment and flies out with frightened face, but the teachers' room is now in one of the cottages outside the gates and is very much more convenient.

There are two more Clendinnens at the Practising School in Classes III. and I. Their mother now lives at Ambleside and the school-girls stay with her, but a student goes down there every week as of old.

Miss Hodgson has begun a course of lectures on Architecture, illustrated by lantern views, which promises to be very interesting.

There are five freshers this term, who are all very capable of taking care of themselves.

Lastly, but most important, you will be glad to hear that Miss Mason has been keeping better this term. I should just like to add, if you will excuse the length of this letter, that walks to Mrs. Firth's enjoyable Art Lectures are invariably accompanied by a shower of rain.

Readers of the *Umile Pianta* will probably be interested to hear of an Educational Reading Circle which we Seniors have formed this term. Every half-holiday we spend an hour studying, as far as possible first-hand, the works of great educators, for we all feel, as you all no doubt felt, how unsatisfactory it is to read only criticisms and essays on Educational Reformers without coming into actual contact with the living thought of these men in their own words. I think I may say that we now all enjoy "Quick," though at first we found him fearfully hard, and even, to tell the whole truth, a trifle dull at times. Still we do feel that he only aims at guiding students into more intimate acquaintance with those of whom he writes.

Our plan is this: any student who feels that she has sufficient interest in an knowledge of some educator whom she has particularly studied to enable her to help the rest of us to a clearer conception of his importance, reads aloud the cream of his writings, dwelling especially on those thoughts which have passed into P.N.E.U. philosophy, and on those which originated with the author and had great influence on his contemporaries and successors. Side-issues and irrelevant questions are promptly quashed, but discussion and comment on important points is part of our programme.

We have already studied with much pleasure Prof. Laurie's *Comenius*—a collection of the most important passages of his numerous works and careful presentiment of his whole scheme of education. It was delightful to find the old familiar principles "Proceed from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract," etc., in their quaint Comenian dress. While feeling the justice of the wise man's conclusions we could not but smile and wonder at the grotesque and far-fetched analogies on which he based them. I quote an example:—

"Nature predisposes matter to seek form. The bird hatched *desires* to walk and to peck and finally to fly. Therefore the desire of knowing and learning is to be stirred up in boys in every way."

The chapter on teaching Art particularly appeals to us as formulating the best rules of Handicraft Teaching.

We have devoted several evenings to Fröbel, having obtained from Miss Blogg a copy of Hexford's clear and concise *Student's Fröbel*, which we read in connection with the essays by Quick, Rooper, and Miall (in the latter's *Thirty Years of Teaching*, a collection of useful practical thoughts on education). Next time we meet we are going to read Winch's *Problems in Education*, Miss Mason having recommended it as giving a fair view of modern thought.

Locke's *Thoughts on Education* and *Essay on the Conduct of the Human Understanding* will receive an evening or two, though we do not feel very strongly drawn towards him.

Then we pass on to *Pestalozzi*, by de Guimps and to Herbart. We have borrowed Felkin's Introduction to and Translation of Herbart's *Science of Education*, and hope to

obtain some books on his Psychology and Principles of Teaching.

Miss Mason has provided us with a copy of Herbert Spencer's Essay about which we are keenly interested, probably because Quick writes so critically and unsympathetically about him.

This year we have had special time for reading a most interesting book, James' *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, etc. We can recommend it to you as very well worth study.

With sincere regards from

THE STUDENTS.

STUDENTS' MEETINGS.

June 23rd.—Number present, 6: Miss Allen, Miss Spearman, Miss Nesbitt, Miss Magill, Miss Ross, Miss Faunce. This meeting came so soon after the Conference that doubtless distant members found it difficult to get away again. Dr. Helen Webb read her Address to Nurses, which she had given as an afternoon lecture during the Conference. There was no discussion, everyone feeling Miss Webb was on her own ground. The meeting broke up early. E. C. A.

There was no meeting in July, owing to the hot weather having sent people out of town.

Christmas Term. October 28th.—Three present: Miss Allen, Miss Magill, Miss Beddow. This meeting was held on a Sunday, to suit Mrs. Franklin, but it was so scarcely attended that we really felt it was unfair to ask Miss Montagu to read her paper to such a small audience. Her subject was "Pain," treated beautifully. She dwelt upon the privilege of pain, and how it was a means of ennobling character we are apt to neglect and take too much care to avoid, in our child-training. E. C. A.

No other meetings were held at Mrs. Franklin's this term.

Committee Meeting.

A Committee Meeting was held on December 8th, at Mrs. Ilsley's, which was well attended. It was called "to discuss business details" that the Editor, Secretary and Treasurer did not feel competent to decide alone.

The following were the agenda:—

1. That subscriptions should be raised to 3/6 to enable us to have three issues of *L' Umile Pianta* yearly.
 2. That all subscriptions should be paid direct to the Treasurer, who should send out printed notices to call them in.
 3. That each number of *L' Umile Pianta* should contain a short account of the aims of the Association, with a list of Vice-Presidents.
 4. Any general reform suggested by individuals.
- Mrs. Ilsley in the chair.

The first point was put forward by Miss Allen. Miss Nesbitt said she had heard from a few students that they did not mind the extra 6d., but from none that they did. Discussion decided that three issues were very desirable. They would do more than anything else to keep the Association a working whole, and if less time elapsed between each number interest could be better sustained. Miss Magill hoped that the third number would not be the leavings of the other two, but Miss Nesbitt assured us she had plenty of matter for three good numbers.

The second point was proposed by Miss Flower, as treasurer. It was carried unanimously, all committee members feeling it was a more business-like arrangement than the former one of collecting subscriptions by years. With such a scattered Association as ours, the only way to keep it together is to centralize. A leaflet form for the Treasurer's use was drawn up.

Miss Lanphier spoke on the third point, and said that really the object of the Association was to keep the students together, that they might feel they were working as a united body, not as units. The result of her remarks and of others, together with Miss Mason's letter to the members in an early *L' Umile Pianta*, will be found elsewhere.

After an interval for tea, we returned to business, and Miss Alice Magill's literary scheme was discussed. So many